

University's Millionth Volume Survived Fire, War for 200 Years

"Catalog of the Stars," a 17th Century manuscript, received a special welcome on the Brigham Young University campus Oct. 28 when it took its honored place as the millionth volume in the J. Reuben Clark Jr., Library.

The manuscript represents the work of Johannes Hevelius, an astronomer renowned in his day, who spent a lifetime mapping the fixed stars.

Although a printed version of his work was published after his death, this original work includes more detailed information and is the only surviving manuscript of major importance from the hand of Hevelius. It represents some 40 years of continuous study of the stars.

RECOGNIZED TODAY

Much of Hevelius' findings is still recognized to this day, and modern instruments have helped add upon his work. Names which he gave the constellations and to the lunar landscape are still in use. (The Apollo 15 astronauts explored near the Appennine range, while the first manned moon landing was close to the Hevelius-named Apoloni and Apollonia.)

Special activities marked the acquisition of the millionth volume commencing at the forum assembly when Dr. Arthur Henry King posed the question, "Where are Plato's Guardians Now?" He is a professor of English at BYU and former assistant general and controller of the Education Division of the British Council, London, England.

Following the assembly, a donor's luncheon was held for the 22 persons and organizations who contributed to the purchase of the manuscript, a lecture on the work of Hevelius, a panel discussion, and display of the volume in the library.

However, the original handwritten manuscript was overlooked as the family sold Hevelius' material and it even survived the Saxonian-Russian siege of Danzig in which the Hevelius' home, retained by his oldest married daughter, was heavily damaged by artillery fire.

In 1782, Daniel Gottlob Davisson, a great-grandson of the astronomer, willed all the remaining Hevelius' material to the Society of Natural History of Danzig. The manuscript was included in this material and reference to it remaining in Danzig can be found in the various biographies of Hevelius.

With World War II, the Society of Natural History was relocated first to another building and then to a library near Danzig. This building was destroyed during the final days of fighting. The Society itself became defunct when Danzig was destroyed in 1945, and the area was incorporated into the Polish Peoples Republic.

There is no known record of how the manuscript survived this continual brush with disaster. But a little more than 20 years later, it was acquired by booksellers Volkoff and von Hohenlohe. It now has found a place of honor at Brigham Young University.

BUILT INSTRUMENTS

Hevelius was unique not only in his observations but also in that he built his own instruments, which were more accurate than any preceding equipment, and engraved and printed his own books. He established an observatory in Danzig which was recognized as the finest in Europe and which was not surpassed until the construction of the observatories in Paris (1671) and Greenwich (1676).



THE MILLIONTH VOLUME — With a wide angle lens and some slight distortions, photographer Stan Macbean captures a happy mood on the faces of library executives instrumental in obtaining this rare millionth volume. From left to right are Chad Flake, curator of special collections; Donald K. Nelson, director of libraries; Donald T. Schmidt, assistant director of libraries; and A. Dean Larsen, assistant director for collection development.

Eight years before his death, his observatory was consumed by fire. The fire, believed to have been started by a coachman leaving a lighted candle in the stable, destroyed the three Hevelius' houses which comprised his home and his center of research and which formed the foundation for his observation platform.

The platform supporting his instruments was built across the roofs of the houses. Also destroyed in the fire were his instruments and the majority of his books and findings. The only important manuscript escaping the blaze was his star catalog.

Two years later, in 1681, he had rebuilt his observatory and continued in his mapping of the fixed stars. Finally he turned to the task of printing his findings, but, with only half the catalog printed, he died in 1687. Three years later the work was completed under the guidance of his widow, his second wife Elisabeth.

On her death in 1693, the original manuscript along with a complete set of published works of Hevelius, plus his instruments and some of the copper plates that he had engraved, were left to her daughters.

**From 150 Volumes in 1876
To Millionth Book in 1971**



PROJECTING SUN'S IMAGE — Johannes Hevelius, left, and his helper use telescope and equipment made by Hevelius to project the image of the sun onto a sheet of paper, observing the transit of the planet Mercury across the face of the sun on May 3, 1661. (From *Machinae Coelestis Pars Prior*)

The development from a 150-volume library in 1876 to a million-volume library in 1971 is a 95-year-old story of the Brigham Young University Library in the pursuit of storing knowledge. The past 20 years of that pursuit is an epic story of incredible growth.

The birth pangs of the library began in the office of Principal Karl G. Maeser in 1876 when the Brigham Young Academy received a gift of 150 books from the Provo City Library. The principal's office, which served as the library for many years, was located in the old Lewis Building, now the site of the Provo Chamber of Commerce building on the corner of West Center and Third West Streets.

Meager library holdings during pioneer times was not peculiar to the B.Y.A., but was the condition for most schools of the nation. The University of Utah, which had a 25-year head start on the B.Y.A., had accumulated only 2,500 books by 1876.

BOOKS SAVED

In 1884 a fire destroyed the Lewis Building, but most of the books were saved and transferred to the new library (again in or adjacent to the principal's office) in the ZCMI warehouse, corner of South University Avenue and Fifth South street, which served as the home of the B.Y.A. until 1891.

The first recorded mention of a librarian serving in the B.Y.A. is Mahew Dalley, part time teacher and librarian, who reported in 1878-79 that the academy library "now has 500 books and 158 copies of magazines." Dalley was followed by James E. Talmage, who served a one-year stint, and a host of other part-time librarians up to 1912 when Annie Gillespie became the first full-time librarian.

When the new academy building was completed in 1891 (later called the Education Building) at 5th North and North University Avenue, the library was located in historic Room D, and later adjacent areas, and boasted of a 1,000-volume book collection.

From 1900 until 1925 the book collection rose from 3,000 to nearly 30,000 volumes. Librarians serving during this period were George M. Cope, 1900-1905; Olaf W. Andelin, 1905-1912; Annie Gillespie, 1912-1923; and Anna Ollorton, 1923-1948. A library committee, organized in 1906 and later headed by Alice Louise Reynolds for many years, did much to stimulate gifts of books and money for the erection of a new library building.

NEW GRANT LIBRARY

A new era was launched upon the completion of the Heber J. Grant Library building in 1925. The building was built to accommodate 110,000 book collection. In just 13 years, however, the book collection had reached nearly 115,000 volumes. After 1940 additional space was utilized in other buildings on the campus for storing books. By 1950 the book collection totaled 165,301 volumes. Librarians serving from 1925-1954 were Anna Ollorton until 1948, Asael Lambert, 1948-1951, and Naomi Rich Earl, 1951-1954.

With the new presidential administration of Ernest L. Wilkinson getting underway in 1951, a student enrollment of over 4,000 students, and a bulging library book collection of over 170,000 volumes—a critical library situation was developing in terms of space, adequacy of the collection, staff and budget.

The annual book rate of growth by 1960-61 increased some five times the 1951-52 rate. Approximately 30,354 volumes were added during the 1960-61 school year which brought the total book holdings up to 313,417 volumes. During that 10-year period, the full-time staff increased from nine to 49 members, which was still the smallest library staff compared to 40 major universities.